

What to do when someone dies

You may wish to refer to this because you are recently bereaved, or maybe you have a very sick relative with little time left to live.

Where somebody is seriously ill, please do let us know so that we can include that person in our prayers for the sick in the parish newsletter. Also, they may wish to be anointed by a priest.

In the case of a death, we offer you our deepest sympathy on your loss, and wish to make the funeral arrangements as easy as possible for you. These words offer you the information you need to organise a funeral Mass or service at St Bartholomew's. If your loved one has died at home, then you need to contact your GP and then a funeral director, so that they can remove their body. In the case of sudden death, it is normal practice for the police to attend, and there is no need to be alarmed.

Please advise us as soon as possible when a relative has died. We will then include them in the prayers at Mass and in the Parish Newsletter. We can also advise you of possible dates and times for the funeral and discuss whether you would like a full Requiem Mass or a shorter funeral service. The funeral service can take place either in the church

or in the crematorium or cemetery chapel. Cremations usually include a committal service, equivalent to what happens at the graveside for a burial.

There are several locally based funeral directors, many of which have amalgamated with much larger companies. Below is a list of some of them.

We make no recommendation as to which one to use.

Alfred Smith

15 Rowan Road SW16 5JF Tel: 020 8679 3552

Dowsett & Jenkins (*Part of Dignity Plc.*)

1507 London Road SW16 4AE Tel: 020 8764 2912

Gillman Funeral Service (*Part of Funeral Partners Ltd*)

1461 London Road SW16 4AQ Tel: 020 8679 7422

Maxwell Brothers (*Part of Dignity Plc.*)

536 Streatham High Road SW16 3QF Tel: 020 8764 2245

Rowland Brothers International

301-305 Whitehorse Road CRO 2HR Tel. 020 8684 1667

When you go to the funeral directors you will need to take the death certificate with you. This is normally obtained from the Registry Office for the borough in which somebody has died. However, you can begin making funeral arrangements before you get the actual certificate.

The funeral director will contact us at St Bartholomew's to make the final arrangements for the date and time of the Mass or service. They will also liaise with the cemetery or crematorium for the time of the service there.

As is the case in most Catholic parishes, we generally celebrate Funeral Masses at the morning weekday Mass and not at other times. At St. Bartholomew's this is at 10:00. If there are exceptional circumstances then we ask the family to make an appointment to see and speak to one of the clergy (the telephone is often not a helpful way to discuss arrangements in these emotional situations). If there are practical reasons for doing so, we will do whatever we can in order to hold the funeral at another time.

The main reasons for celebrating a funeral at the 10:00 Mass are:

- A Funeral Mass is a public celebration of the Liturgy, not a private service

- It allows the whole community to gather to pray for the safe and happy repose of the soul of the deceased
- To provide support to the bereaved family, who might be too emotional to say the prayers and responses of the Mass or to sing the hymns

Please allow the funeral director to make the final arrangements. That is their job. If they need to liaise with us about any aspect, they will do so.

Once the funeral has been arranged with the funeral directors, please make an appointment to see the priest who will be conducting the Mass, or the priest/deacon who will be conducting the service. They will take you through the Mass/service, readings, hymns and other things you need to know. It is important that an approved version of the Bible is used, which is generally the Revised Standard Version (RSV) or the Jerusalem Bible. If you are having a Mass, we usually sing hymns and have an organist. Please be aware that the organist's stipend and any church fees are always included in the Funeral Director's bill. This is so that you do not have to concern yourself with such things on the day.

What to expect at a Funeral Mass

The most important aspect about Catholic funerals is that they express the Christian hope in eternal life and the resurrection of the body on the last day. Every component of the Catholic funeral rites should express these fundamental beliefs and hopes. Our funeral rites are not "a celebration of life," as they are referred to sometimes, but a privileged opportunity to return to God the gift of the deceased, hoping to usher them into paradise with the aid of our prayers. Our love for the departed is expressed after death, above all else, in our prayer for them.

There is usually an entrance hymn, a reading from the Old Testament or from the New Testament or from both. The first reading is followed by a Psalm which may also be sung. There is a Gospel reading, prayers of intercession, a communion hymn and recessional hymn; but please discuss this with the priest who will be conducting the funeral. We can provide specimen readings etc. which are commonly used at funerals. We also have a list of hymns which are both appropriate and well-known for funerals, together with a copy of the prayers of intercession.

If a family member would like to pay a spoken tribute to the deceased (a eulogy) this usually takes place after the coffin has been received into

the church and before the Mass or service itself begins.

The organist is often willing to play other music during the Mass, if the music is available to them. If you can let the priest know what you would like, they will inform the organist. If necessary, the organist will contact you directly, particularly if somebody will be singing a solo which requires the organist to accompany them, to allow also for a practice with the soloist. At a Funeral Mass, in line with Church Teaching, the music should be of a religious nature and appropriate for the celebration of Mass. For a funeral service there is more flexibility in the choice of music.

The front benches will be left for family and friends of the deceased. Our weekday congregation is very supportive, and will automatically sit further back in the church or over to the sides, giving the family plenty of room.

Typical Order of Service for a Funeral Mass:

- **Entrance Hymn**
- **Eulogy**
- **Start of Mass**
- **Reading(s)** Old or New Testament or both
- **Psalm:** Spoken or Sung
- **Gospel**
- **Homily**

- **Prayers of Intercession** (bidding prayers)
- **Offertory** (Offertory procession optional) & **Offertory Hymn**
- **Our Father and Sign of Peace**
- **Communion & Communion Hymn**
- **Prayers of Commendation,**
including incensing and blessing of the coffin
- **Recessional Hymn**